

Want to save time searching for Good Bulls? There's an app for that!

Heather Campbell

Region: Northern Victoria

Topic: Good Bulls App

It's not unusual for Heather Campbell to spot a bull she likes while browsing social media. The northern Victorian breeder and sharefarmer whips out her DataGene Good Bulls App and investigates.

Thanks to the app, she can easily tell if he's a bull she can use in the 220-cow, predominantly Holstein herd she manages for Steve and Margot Henty at Cohuna.

"One of the good problems since the introduction of

genomics is that there are now many bulls that hit everyone's breeding targets," she said.

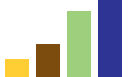
"It's great, but it makes decisions on bulls a lot more difficult – it's the same problem with Netflix – you are served up to 100 different options and you end up picking nothing because you have too many to choose from. It's decision paralysis.

"I usually use the Good Bulls App to filter down the shortlist of bulls and then pull-out full proofs from the bulls on the shortlist and then that makes the big list, of hundreds of bulls on the market, a lot smaller."

The Hentys' herd, including the third owned by Heather registered under the Meadridge Holstein prefix, ranks 71 in



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Australian herd recording herds for Balanced Performance Index (BPI).

According to the business's Genetic Progress Report, 98% of calves born in 2020 were sired by Good Bulls.

To qualify for Good Bulls status, a bull must meet DataGene's minimum requirements for Balanced Performance Index (BPI) and reliability and be available for purchase.

Breeding polled animals is Heather's top priority.

Then there's a list of other requirements that include – but aren't limited to – stature, fertility, heel depth and other 'basic' udder traits such as teat length.

The Good Bulls App allows Heather to select bulls that tick all these boxes because she can set her own search parameters.

"For example, I put a cap on stature because we physically can't fit large cows in the shed," she said.

"So, in the app, I set the maximum for stature at 106, one outside my range. This way I get to see the bulls that are 105 and less, so I don't miss bulls that only just miss the mark.

"What I pick though depends on the rest of bulls - who has better balanced proof. By putting all the selection traits into the app I'm able to make a shortlist and pick the best fit from there.

"Setting the stature limit makes sure I don't pick a bull and then realise he's 115 for stature and we can't use him."

Updates of the Good Bulls App has also made it easier to search for polled bulls, according to Heather.

"I've been using the app since it first came out, but you used to only be able to pull-up single P bulls and then double-P bulls separately," she said.

"Now all the bulls that are marked polled in the system come up together in filters, it saves us a lot of time searching for bulls."

A large proportion of the herd are now polled. Of this autumn's 18 calves, only six required disbudding.

Heather also refuses to select a bull if it is less than 110 for Fertility ABV, plugging this figure into the Good Bulls App as a minimum for the bull selection filter.

But, in the end, she said breeding is all about individual preferences.

"It is about finding the bulls that fit your herd best," she said.

"Obviously I won't pick one with a bad temperament or milking speed – anything below 99 for temperament is out the door.

"It is not worth milking unpleasant cows, life's too short to be milking cows you don't like.

"Plus, no-one says they select on likeability, but the truth is it is the highest correlated trait to survival. If you don't like a cow, you will probably sell that cow."

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